

## Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 EUR-12 /087 R

DRAFTED BY AF/W:DVKILLION:MN

APPROVED BY AF:WESCHAUFLE, JR.

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NEA/AFN:DJAMESON (INFO)

NEA/AFN:LMURRAY (INFO)

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R 070239Z FEB 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 030398

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, MR

SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON AF ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY SCHAUFLE--SPANISH SAHARA DISPUTE

1. MAURITANIAN AMBASSADOR ABDALLAH PAID INTRODUCTORY  
COURTESY CALL ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHAUFLE FEBRUARY 4.  
AF/W DIRECTOR AND COUNTRY OFFICER ATTENDED.

2. FOLLOWING BRIEF COMMENTS AFFIRMING MUTUAL FRIENDSHIP  
AND LACK OF ANY PARTICULAR US-GIRM BILATERAL PROBLEMS,  
AMBASSADOR PROCEEDED TO OUTLINE MAURITANIA'S PRESENT  
SITUATION, WHICH MARKED BY: (A) GREATER ECONOMIC GROWTH  
AS SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT INTEREST ; (B) FRIENDLY RELATIONS  
WITH MOROCCO; (C) SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SIMILARITY TO  
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NEIGHBORS SUCH AS SENEGAL AND MALI; AND (D) ALGERIAN

OCCUPATION OF PART OF MAURITANIAN TERRITORY.

3. ASST. SEC. WELCOMED ABDALLAH'S VISIT AND EXPRESSED DESIRE FOR CONTINUED FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN MAURITANIA AND US, WHICH IN OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS. TOUCHING ON LAST POINT OF AMBASSADOR'S OUTLINE, OF MOST IMMEDIATE INTEREST, ASST. SEC. COMMENTED THAT AFTER RECENT CLASHES SITUATION IN SAHARA APPEARS TO BE SOMEWHAT CALMER NOW.

4. AMBASSADOR RESPONDED HIS COUNTRY HAS IMPRESSION THAT ALGERIA WISHES TO DENY PART OF SAHARA TO MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA. THE ALGERIANS MIGHT HOLD ONTO MAHABES, AND POSSIBLY DECLARE SOME FORM OF INDEPENDENT "REPUBLIC OF THE SAHARA" FROM THAT BASE. WITH THESE AREAS UNDER ITS CONTROL, ALGERIA MIGHT THEN ATTEMPT TO PRESSURE MOROCCO TO NEGOTIATE THE DISPUTE. ABDALLAH DECLARED THAT MOROCCO WOULD NEVER NEGOTIATE, AND ASSERTED THAT ALL ARAB COUNTRIES ARE ON THE SIDE OF MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA. ABDALLAH THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS THE ALGERIANS SOUGHT ARAB LEAGUE-OAU MEDIATION ONLY IN ORDER TO GAIN TIME TO BUILD UP THEIR MILITARY CAPABILITIES IN THE MAHABES AREA.

5. ABDALLAH CLAIMED POLISARIO AS A TRULY INDEPENDENT ENTITY DOES NOT REALLY EXIST. POLISARIO IS LARGELY MADE UP OF DISAFFECTED MAURITANIANS REPLYING ON ALGERIAN MILITARY SUPPORT. ABDALLAH ADDED THAT EVEN THOUGH THE ALGERIANS HAD ATTACKED MAURITANIAN OUTPOSTS, THE GIRM WOULD NOT AT PRESENT BREAK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

6. IN RESPONSE TO ASST. SEC.'S QUESTION, ABDALLAH EXPRESSED VIEW THERE ARE NO RPT NO CUBANS OR NORTH VIETNAMESE IN THE SAHARA. PERHAPS IN THE FLUSH OF THE CEREMONIAL WELCOME BY THE POLISARIO FOR NORTH VIETNAM'S GENERAL GIAP, HE MIGHT HAVE GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT "VOLUNTEERS" WOULD BE SENT. THE SPANISH-SPEAKING CUBANS WOULD BE MORE LIKELY, BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF THEIR PRESENCE.

7. ASST. SEC. EXPRESSED HOPE THAT, ALTHOUGH THERE WOULD PROBABLY BE GUERRILLA ACTIONS FOR SOMETIME, A PEACEFUL

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RESOLUTION WOULD BE FOUND IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED. ABDALLAH SHARED THIS HOPE.

8. IN CONCLUSION, ABDALLAH EXTENDED INVITATION TO ASST. SEC. TO VISIT MAURITANIA, AND LOOKED FORWARD TO WORKING WITH HIM IN WASHINGTON. ASST. SEC. THANKED ABDALLAH FOR REMARKS, AND NOTED IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS WITH MAURITANIAN AND OTHER AFRICAN EMBASSIES IN WASHING-

TON, WHICH WAS ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL TASKS OF THE AF  
BUREAU. SISCO

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 07 FEB 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** ElyME  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976STATE030398  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** DVKILLION:MN  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760047-0902  
**From:** STATE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760271/aaaackkn.tel  
**Line Count:** 117  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ORIGIN AF  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ElyME  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 14 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <14 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <08 SEP 2004 by ElyME>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** MAURITANIAN AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON AF ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHAUFEELE--SPANISH SAHARA DISPUTE  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PBOR, MR, (SCHAUFEELE, WILLIAM S JR)  
**To:** NOUAKCHOTT  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006